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Galway's Mood for Reagan Subdued

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GALWAY, Ireland, June 2 — The thing you noticed today in Galway was the police — at least 1,400 of them, packed into a few square blocks at the center of a city that has a population of only 27,000 — a huge presence of men in blue trenchcoats.

At some places along the route followed by President Reagan's motorcade, there were more policemen than spectators. At most points the police had not even bothered to put up metal barricades to hold the crowds back.

And even at Eyre Square, where the largest number of well-wishers assembled, the mood was subdued, strangely un-Irish, with polite applause and a flutter of plastic Irish and American flags rather than full-throated shouting and cheering.

President and Mrs. Reagan waved from the back of their closed limousine, but most people on the sidewalk barely caught a glimpse of them as they sped past toward University College, Galway, where Mr. Reagan received an honorary degree and made a brief speech.

It was his only public appearance, lasting for less than two hours, on what had been billed as "the President's first full day in Ireland."

Triumphal visits by John F. Kennedy 20 years ago and by Pope John Paul II five years ago, both of which drew crowds many times as large as today's, were recalled by people in the crowd.

A souvenir seller whose business was slack remarked, "Bring back the Pope."

Outbreak of Violence Feared

"Disappointing," said a young schoolteacher wearing a Reagan sweatshirt. "People never got excited about this visit, and some of the ones who did were afraid of violence."

Violence was a notable absentee, except for a scuffle or two between the police and onlookers. But, as expected, there were a number of protests and demonstrations against the President and his foreign policy, especially his stand on nuclear weapons and his policies in Central America.

A number of faculty members stayed away from the President's speech at the university, protesting the honorary degree to Mr. Reagan. The Convocation of the National University of Ireland, of which the campus here is a part, voted overwhelmingly to condemn the award, and some graduates burned their diplomas at rallies.

Bishop Eamonn Casey of Galway, who also refused to attend the ceremony,

said he was heartened by the news of the meeting Friday between Secretary of State George P. Shultz and President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of Nicaragua. But he said he could still not bring himself to honor "the head of a Government that gives aid to murderers."

Bishop Casey has worked and traveled extensively in El Salvador, as have many Irish missionaries.

Demonstrators who had hoped to disrupt the ceremony in the university quadrangle were kept a quarter-mile away, confined by the police to a side street and a parking lot — all but invisible to the President as he rode past well out of earshot of the assembly.

A thousand or more people gathered there an hour before Mr. Reagan's arrival, a mixture of antinuclear campaigners, left-wing politicians, nuns, monks and others. Some had painted their faces to look like skulls. Others carried posters, including two nuns whose banner said, "We are mourning the 50,000 dead in El Salvador."

As speaker after speaker denounced Mr. Reagan as a warmonger, hundreds of black balloons were released.

"Ronnie Reagan is no good!" the crowd chanted. "Send him back to Hollywood!" and later, "Ronald Reagan, C.I.A., how many kids did you kill today?"